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Editorial: Take it to the voters

It's no secret relations between Democratic Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz and Republican Gov. Mike Pence have been icy. The latest twist in this tale was chronicled in a Dec. 6 Associated Press story, which carried news Pence's education adviser Claire Fiddian-Green will soon become the top executive of the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. This news came on the heels of the announcement of Pence's dissolution of the Center for Education and Career Innovation.

"Fiddian-Green has been Pence's special assistant for education innovation and co-leader of the education center, which he created in 2013 and has been a part of frequent clashes with Democratic state schools Superintendent Glenda Ritz over control of state education policy," reported the AP. "Pence said [Dec. 4] that he was disbanding the center in February to help improve dealings with Ritz."

Pence should be grateful he's Indiana's governor right now. He certainly didn't win by a landslide. In 2012, he beat Democratic challenger John R. Gregg by 81,664 votes out of 2.4 million cast. During the same election cycle, Democrat Glenda Ritz upset Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett, garnering 1,332,775 votes (52.8 percent) to his

1,190,716 (47.2 percent). If you're keeping track at home, Ritz attracted a larger number of voters than even Pence did (1,264,877) during the same election. Ritz's election was obviously a push-back to former governor Mitch Daniels and Bennett's sweeping education reforms. It was more of a release valve for that frustration, if anything.

Now, if state superintendent was a position appointed by the governor instead of a separately elected position, would it not place the blame or credit for education policy in the state squarely on the governor's shoulders? Some say it would increase accountability in the state's chief executive and reduce education-policy gridlock, while others say it would turn the office into a rubber stamp. So, here's our solution: Let the voters decide. This issue should be decided by referendum. It's an idea at least worth considering.